

TIME

These Are Some of the Top Catholic Lawmakers in U.S.

BY TESSA BERENSON SEPTEMBER 24, 2015

Pope Francis won't just be speaking to members of Congress Thursday, he'll also be speaking to some fellow Catholics.

About 31% of the current Congress is Catholic, and there are six Catholic justices on the Supreme Court. Interestingly, given the history of anti-Catholic prejudice in American politics, both of these percentages are actually higher than the American public, where 22% identify as Catholic.

House Speaker John Boehner, who is Catholic and has long held a dream for a Pope to visit Congress, met Pope Francis Thursday morning, while others will watch him address a joint meeting of Congress.

Here's a look at some of the top Catholic lawmakers and politicians in the U.S.

Congress

John Boehner: The Ohio Republican and Speaker of the House was instrumental in arranging Pope Francis's visit to Congress. Boehner has invited every Pope to the Capitol during his 24 years in Congress, **Politico reports**, and Pope Francis finally agreed.

Nancy Pelosi: House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi also identifies as Catholic. When Pope Francis's U.S. visit was announced, she put out **a statement** saying,

“Ever since his inauguration in 2013, Pope Francis has renewed the faith of Catholics worldwide and inspired a new generation of people, regardless of religious affiliation, to be instruments of God’s peace.”

Joe Biden: The Vice President, a devout Catholic, has been open about relying on his faith after the death of his son Beau Biden at the beginning of the summer. “For me, my religion is just an enormous sense of solace,” Biden told Stephen Colbert in a recent *Late Show* appearance. “Some of it relates to ritual, some of it relates to just comfort in what you’ve done your whole life. I go to Mass and I’m able to just be alone, even in the crowd. I say the rosary, I find it to be incredibly comforting.”

Paul Ryan: The Republican Congressman from Wisconsin was also involved in extending the invitation to Pope Francis to address Congress. Despite sharply parting ways with the pope on economic issues, Ryan **has said**, “What I love about the pope is he is triggering the exact kind of dialogue we ought to be having.”

2016 Presidential Candidates

Jeb Bush: The former Republican Governor of Florida and current 2016 presidential candidate converted to Catholicism when he married his wife Columba. But earlier this year he said he does not mix his faith and his politics: “I go to church to have my faith nourished, to have my faith challenged,” **he said**. “That’s why I go to Mass. I don’t go to Mass for economic policy or for things in politics.”

Marco Rubio: The Republican Senator from Florida was raised Catholic, but he has experimented with other religions throughout his life. He was baptized as a Mormon when his family lived in Las Vegas for three years beginning when he was eight years old, and then he converted back to Catholicism when

they moved back to Florida. He now attends both a Catholic church and a Southern Baptist congregation.

Rick Santorum: The former Republican Pennsylvania Senator is a deeply religious, socially conservative Catholic, but he's been open in his criticism of Pope Francis's political agendas. "I think when we get involved with controversial political and scientific theories, then I think the church is probably not as forceful and credible," **he said**, while also saying that he's a "huge fan" of Pope Francis.

Chris Christie: The Republican New Jersey Governor was raised Catholic and doesn't shy away from talking about his religion. But he also sometimes parts with church teachings: "I'm a Catholic, but I've used birth control. And not just the rhythm method," **he said** in August. "My church has a teaching against birth control. Does that make me an awful Catholic, because I believe and practiced that function during part of my life? I don't think so."

Bobby Jindal: The Republican Louisiana Governor was raised Hindu and converted to what he calls being an "**evangelical Catholic**," a conversion that he's made central to his campaign as he woos the religious Right in the country. "I don't know about you, but sometimes it feels like evangelical Christians are the only group that it's okay to discriminate against in this society," **he said** at a prayer breakfast on the campaign trail.

George Pataki: The former Republican New York Governor doesn't often speak about his faith publicly and, like Christie, has taken stances that conflict with church teachings: he's pro-choice and pro-death penalty.

Martin O'Malley: A long-shot contender for the 2016 Democratic nomination, the former Maryland Governor is a practicing Catholic who has said faith **shaped his views on issues** such as the death penalty, which he

abolished in Maryland two years ago. But he has crossed Catholic doctrine on gay marriage.

The Supreme Court

Supreme Court Justices John Roberts, Samuel Alito, Anthony Kennedy, Antonin Scalia, Sonia Sotomayor and Clarence Thomas are all Catholic. These six were appointed by both Republican and Democratic presidents, and their religious views don't always obviously inform their decisions, as they come down on different sides on issues such as same-sex marriage and religious freedom.

Read Next: *Joe Biden: 'Pope Francis Is Challenging Us'*

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